

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Making a plan.

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Even with the threat of Earth's return dragging them back into orbit to rendezvous with Jim and the rest of his command staff on the Hyperion, Sarah's thoughts are weighed down by Zeratul's words. The Protoss had been far too knowledgeable for her tastes, knowing things that she hadn't voiced to anyone... not even those closest to her.

Obviously, she'd been considering going with Myk-Zod and Mystique for some time now. And while she'd been fooling herself that it was still something to be contemplated, the truth was... she had settled on doing so. Whenever they left this universe behind, she had already decided that her place was at their side wherever they wound up next.

She was sure Mystique would be very happy when it finally came up and she of course hoped that Myk-Zod would be too. But it hadn't exactly been relevant yet because the latter was more focused on what he could learn from their technology and upgrading things so he could make some tweaks to his own tech.

Put simply, she'd thought she had time... and in that time, Sarah did have things she wanted to do, things she'd been torn between doing on her own or asking for help for, otherwise she might have already gone for it. And yes, much like Zeratul had said, there were two things in particular that Sarah wanted to accomplish.

Of course, Earth's sudden invasion of the Koprulu Sector threatened to throw all of that into disarray. Perhaps the massive fleet from Earth was precisely why she couldn't achieve both her goals before leaving this universe behind...

Upon arriving on the Hyperion, they link up with Mystique and make their way to the bridge. Along the way, they tell the blue-skinned alien woman all about their encounter with Zeratul down on the surface. Meanwhile, as soon as they arrive on the bridge, Jim gives them a nod before looking back to his comms officer.

“Replay the message.”

A greying man in a military uniform appears on the screen.

“This is Admiral Gerard DuGalle of the Iron Fist Fleet. This military force has been sent by the United Earth Directorate to put an end to the conflict that has plagued the Koprulu Sector once and for all. Any and all alien resistance will be quelled. Furthermore, all Terran Colonies are hereby ordered to stand down and prepare yourselves for the arrival of UED leadership.”

He pauses for just a moment before his eyes harden even further.

“Neither the defunct Terran Confederacy nor the so-called Terran Dominion are recognized as legitimate governing bodies by the UED. These illegal organizations are ordered to disband immediately and any remaining leadership surrender to our forces. It will only be worse for you if you insist on resisting.”

The message ends there, dropping things into a grim silence... one that Sarah shares in, her lips pressed into a thin line. Until finally, Myk-Zod speaks up with a confused grunt.

“I don’t know if I fully understand why this is so upsetting. At the very least, they might handle the Dominion and Arcturus Mengsk for you.”

The thought causes Sarah’s hand to clench into a fist at her side, while Jim frowns and crosses his arms over his chest.

“Not so simple as all of that, Myk. Situation is... complex. All of our ancestors left Earth behind because of how fucked up it was. And nothing about this new fleet makes me think anything has changed back there. They barely even tried to

dress it up in nice language... they're here to conquer us, to dominate us just as hard as the Dominion... if not harder."

Jim nods over to another member of the bridge crew, who types something on their keyboard for a moment before information fills the screen where Admiral DuGalle's face just was. Sarah leans forward to read it... and her eyes widen at what she sees.

"This is..."

Nodding, Jim sighs.

"Yeah, that's the fleet makeup. They broadcast the numbers themselves... that's how confident they are. But then, they have reason to be. Hundreds of Battlecruisers... and that's just largest ships of their fleet. Earth isn't playing around. They're going to run roughshod over the entire sector with a fleet like that and I bet you anything that Mengsk will just surrender and cut some sort of deal with them at this point."

... He probably would. Sarah grits her teeth, her hands clenching into fists at her sides, even as she finds herself... grasping for any silver lining.

"They're gonna run face first into the Zerg Swarm and the Protoss though. The way they're talking, they'll probably rile up both. That won't go well for them..."

Jim just shrugs half-heartedly though.

"Probably not... only, if the UED is anything like the Confederacy was, we both know what they might try to do with the Zerg. And the Protoss... the Protoss have never really differentiated between different types of Terrans before. I wouldn't expect them to now."

Sarah grimaces more at what he isn't saying than what he is. Indeed, the Confederacy had been obsessed with finding a way to control the Zerg. They'd run countless experiments, some of them involving Sarah herself. The UED... would probably be the exact same way, that would be just their luck.

Meanwhile... yeah, the Protoss weren't exactly going to help them secure their freedom from Earth or Mengsk. If anything, if one group of Terrans riled up the extremely advanced aliens enough for them to retaliate, it was more likely the Protoss would retaliate against *all* Terrans.

"We need to find a way to stop the Iron Fist Fleet. We need to send them packing, send them running back to Earth..."

Jim snorts derisively.

"Us and what army, Sarah? Even the Dominion doesn't have the ships to fight off this size fleet."

Maybe they didn't need an army though. Maybe they just needed a surgical force. Sarah's eyes slowly move to meet Myk-Zod's all of their own accord. As soon as Jim realizes where she's looking, he growls.

"Hell no. This is the same damn thing as it was against General Duke. We can't just keep relying on Myk and his missus, Sarah. They ain't sticking around forever."

Neither is she... but Sarah doesn't say that. She can't quite bring herself to say it, not yet at least. At the same time though, she looks back to Jim with a huff.

"It's either use them or accept that the United Earth Directorate is going to own this sector within months, Jim. We have one chance here to shock and awe the UED into running back home with their tails tucked between their legs. Their intelligence is almost certainly faulty... so if we make them think there are a hundred of Myk-Zod and Mystique... hell, a thousand, then they'll have no choice but to retreat and reassess. Hopefully that will give the Koprulu Sector the time it needs to get to a better place."

Because the truth was, even with how big the Iron Fist Fleet is, the UED definitely wouldn't have pulled this if the Confederacy was still ascendant. They're only trying this because they sense weakness... they smelt blood in the

water. Sarah fully believes the Koprulu Sector is strong enough to stand up to the bullies from Earth if it can just gets its legs back under it. Even if her, Myk-Zod, and Mystique are all gone at a certain point.

Gritting his teeth, Jim crosses his arms over his chest while turning a glare in the direction of their resident aliens.

“And you two? What are you willing to do, exactly? Do you even want to get involved? Paying you with a Science Vessel for helping with the shipyards was one thing... ain’t got anything we can give you that’s worth this amount of help.”

Sarah’s breath hitches as her lovers exchange a glance with one another. Mystique smiles while Myk-Zod frowns for a second. They aren’t telepathically communicating, she would know, but it is as though they have an entire conversation in the span of a few moments of silence. Finally, Myk-Zod looks to her, to Sarah specifically.

“What would you have us do, exactly?”

In that moment, Sarah knows... he’s only even considering this for one reason and one reason only... her. Jim is right, they’ve already gotten what they wanted, they don’t need anything else from him or his Raiders. But they’ve formed a bond with her... and so for her and her alone, they will act.

She takes a brief second to think and is grateful when they give it to her. No point in going into this half-cocked, after all. If they’re going to do this, they need an ironclad plan.

“... We have to act before they get much deeper into the Sector. We need to stop them before they can get any proper victories or successes under their belt. The moment they win a battle, they’ll feel like they can win every battle... but if they never win in the first place, we can truly stop them in their tracks.”

She looks from Myk-Zod to Mystique and back again.

“Just the three of us... the three of us will go and gather up their leadership by force. Bring every Captain, every Admiral, every officer they have to one place. And we’ll... tell them exactly what will happen if they don’t turn around and go home.”

Mystique has a savage grin on her face now. Myk-Zod has a contemplative look on his. Jim...

“And what exactly will happen, Sarah?”

Turning back to her old flame, Sarah lets out a low breath... even as her eyes glow briefly with purple energy.

“I’ll blow their brains out of their skulls with my mind and we’ll try their second in commands next.”

Silence reigns on the bridge at that, more than a few of the bridge crew looking rather queasy at her threat. Jim though... Jim just looks sad.

“I suppose that might be one way to convince them.”

He doesn’t sound certain of that. And yet... he also knows he can’t stop her. That he doesn’t own her. And that she’ll do it with or without his help. Finally, Sarah looks back to Myk-Zod and Mystique, because the truth is that she *can’t* do this without their help.

But finally, Myk-Zod nods.

“Alright.”

And there it is. Simple as that. Of course... not really. There’s a lot more planning to do, but in the moment, all that can really happen is that Raynor’s Raiders begin making their way in the direction where that message broadcast from, so they can get close enough to drop Sarah, Myk-Zod, and Mystique off.

In the meantime... the three of them leave the bridge together and the moment they're all alone, Myk-Zod turns to her.

"We need to talk."

Sarah straightens up, expecting him to have some sort of objection to her plan that he didn't want to voice in front of everyone else. But as it turns out... that's not it at all.

"It's about what that Protoss told us down on the planet below. About the prophecy."

Ah. That.

"What was he talking about when he said you were 'of two minds', Sarah? And that you had things you wanted to accomplish, but you could only accomplish one of them?"

Sarah sighs and slumps a little at that. Even as she'd been deciding what they were going to do about the UED, she hadn't fully stopped thinking about Zeratul's words. And... if anyone deserved to know, it was these two.

"There are... people I want to kill. Two in particular. One is Arcturus Mengsk. I want him dead, not just because he betrayed me and left me behind to the Zerg, but because he's only going to make the Sector a worse place if he's allowed to truly establish his 'Dominion'. The other... the other is the Overmind."

She's talked to Myk-Zod and Mystique before about the Zerg Overmind, of course. None of them had had any idea that such a thing even existed back when they'd first met on Tarsonis, but their encounters with the cerebrates and their extremely close call and defeat of Daggoth had left them more knowledgeable than they otherwise would have been.

Sarah was certain she'd done significant damage to the Overmind with her last attack back on Tarsonis... but she hadn't killed it like she did Daggoth and every

other cerebrate on the planet. Because it hadn't been on planet, it had been elsewhere. The distance had been too great.

So... she'd wanted to finish what she started. Ironically, both individuals she wanted to kill were cases of 'finishing what she started'. She'd been the one to kill Arcturus' family all those years ago after all... and now he needed killing as well. But so did the Overmind, and probably on a far larger scale.

Sarah tells all of this to Myk-Zod and Mystique, explaining her thinking in full before shrugging helplessly at the end.

Myk-Zod frowns, crossing his arms over his chest as he considers her words.

"... I understand why you want them both dead. But I don't understand why you can't have both... Zeratul was frustratingly vague on that front."

Sarah nods in agreement.

"He was. I don't know either... I don't even know if he was just talking out his ass or something. But I do know that the UED has to take priority over both of them. We'll only have a slim chance to turn the fleet back around and send them packing to Earth before they've settled in and refuse to go anywhere. My... decision, if I have to make one, can be made later."

For now, they needed to plan for how they were going to show the Admiral DuGalle and the rest of his officers precisely why they needed to turn around and go home. It certainly wasn't going to be easy, that was for sure.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!